March 17, 2007

To the Senate Finance and Claims Committee:

Subject: Funding of health care clinics and Planned Parenthood

I am one of the lucky ones – I have health insurance. But if I did not (as so many do not), I would know that Planned Parenthood or the health clinics are there for back-up. I would know that if I needed my regular ob/gyn care, a monogram, a pap smear, birth control or other basic healthcare they would be there. Without them where will these patients go?

Planned Parenthood and communities health centers are so important because they work to service those individuals who do not have health insurance, or their health insurance does not cover what they need, or they cannot afford a primary physician for basic health care. In addition, it serves those young adults who are being responsible with family planning.

The savings from cutting this funding will pale in comparison to the cost of undiagnosed cancer, unintended pregnancies, and untreated illnesses. In fact, I have read the following: "Montana's investment in services is highly cost-effective. Nationally, family planning saves nearly $4.00 in public expenditures for every $1 spent (Guttmacher Institute, More Women in Need of Publicly Funded Family Planning Services, May 2010). The approximate savings in Medicaid costs for the prevention of 1 unintended pregnancy is over $12,000. This savings includes prenatal care, delivery, and the first year of an infant's medical care.

The lack of affordable birth control will result in increased unwanted pregnancies which means an increase in abortions.

It is difficult to think we would cut the budget in a way that affects so many women and men -- people who need the help. It really defies common sense. These clinics are important for anyone who uses them now and anyone who will need them in the future.

Please reinstate the funding for the health care clinics and Planned Parenthood.

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